

Special Committee of the Whole Report

April 25, 2016

The Committee of the Whole met Monday, April 25, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. in the Quorum Court Meeting Room, Benton County Administration Building, Third Floor, 215 East Central, Bentonville, Arkansas.

15 JPs Present: Sheridan, Shadlow, J. Harrison, Allen, K. Harrison, Adams, Jones, Sandlin, Anglin, Slinkard, Chiocco, Leadabrand, Moore, Meyers, Moehring

Others Present: Assessor Linda Hambrick, County Attorney George Spence, Sergeant Chuck Wells, Cave Springs Mayor Travis Lee, Sheriff Candidate Glenn Latham, Interim Sheriff Applicants Robert Bersi, John D. Concoby, Joseph P. Fabits, Keith Ferguson, Meyer Gilbert, Lynn Hahn, Andy Lee, Johnie Wood

Media: Tom Sissom – Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, 40/29 News, KNSD

Committee of the Whole chair JP Moore called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

JP Anglin led the prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

JP Adams made a motion that the process be amended so that JPs cannot express an opinion about a specific candidate until after the candidates' presentations and public comment, seconded by JP Leadabrand.

After a short discussion about the motion and the process to be followed, a show of hands vote was recorded as follows:

13 for: Sheridan, Shadlow, J. Harrison, Allen, K. Harrison, Adams, Jones, Sandlin, Anglin, Slinkard, Chiocco, Leadabrand, Moore
2 against: Meyers, Moehring

Motion passed.

JP Moore announced that any JP endorsements would be done after the twenty-five minute Q & A period. He then read the selection process document in its entirety, including the changes made in

the previous motion. A short discussion was held about the JP endorsement part of the process and it was determined that it is not necessary for the JPs to come to the podium to endorse the candidates since this was moved to the discussion phase of the meeting.

Discussion and Interviews with Candidates for Interim Sheriff

1. Robert Bersi

Robert Bersi stated that he was born and raised in Northwest Arkansas. He said that he worked for the Springdale Police Department for almost nineteen years. He said he was promoted to captain in 1997 and served as a captain in every division in the department. He stated that he was a SWAT team commander for thirteen years. He said that he has a thorough understanding of the internal workings of the department and a good background in law enforcement as well as the liabilities and the different issues that are faced by law enforcement administrators. He stated that he has experience with a jail. Springdale still runs a small, city jail. It is nowhere near the capacity of the Benton County jail but they are held to the same standards. He said that he has been involved in policy development and the implementation of that policy. He said that, since he is not a past or current employee of the Sheriff's Office, he has a different perspective and can look at things more objectively. Once those areas are looked at, he does not have a problem with stepping in and making decisions that will benefit the organization. He discussed his FBI training and the network that it has given him to call for answers. He stated that the Sheriff's Office needs someone with a desire to get things back on track and who cares about the employees.

JP Adams asked if he has been to the jail.

Robert Bersi stated that he has not.

JP Allen asked what kind of relationship he would establish with the cities.

Robert Bersi stated that this is an area where he holds an advantage over the other candidates. He stated that he has a close working relationship with all the major chiefs in the cities and has discussed some of the issues that they have had. He said that he would like to see the County and the cities cooperating again.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

Robert Bersi stated that the number one goal is getting the employees to feel good about coming back to work. He stated that, in the last several months, the Sheriff's Office employees have been worried about whether they are going to have a job the next day. He said that they are in limbo until someone goes in to provide leadership.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the incoming Sheriff.

Robert Bersi stated that he will do it as soon as the Sheriff-elect is named after the election. He stated his intention is to get the ship righted so that the department is not in the news all the time and to start working on providing a smooth transition and interactive process for the Sheriff-elect.

JP Jones stated that they received a complaint today from two of the major cities in Benton County discussing things such as deputies running code through the cities and the Special

Operations Unit working inside the cities and not letting the cities know. He asked Robert Bersi if he has a plan for working with the cities and how he would address it.

Robert Bersi stated that there would be a policy about running code and for the Special Operations Department. He said they would need to tweak their plan of action to make sure it does not create an incident that another city would have to respond to. He said it is an officer safety issue.

JP Jones asked if the SO were going to be working in a city during his time of appointment, if that city would be notified before they started operating.

Robert Bersi stated that there may be a particular operation where very few people can know about it but someone will know what is going on.

JP Leadabrand asked if he has had experience with a real crisis such as what is currently going on at the Sheriff's Office.

Robert Bersi stated he has not handled one of this magnitude but there were several times when their chiefs were in the newspaper. He stated that it is important to get the employees thinking about who they really work for – the community.

JP Shadlow asked what is the most important quality in a leader and why.

Robert Bersi answered that it is the ability to listen and hear from everyone in the organization, take the information, filter it and see how best it can affect the organization.

2. John D. Concoby

John Concoby from Rogers stated that he is a lifelong resident of Arkansas. He graduated from the Mounties in 1987 and has been an active participant in the community for many years.

JP Anglin asked if he has any experience in law enforcement.

John Concoby stated that his experience is just in complying with the laws and regulations of two separate industries.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

John Concoby stated that it would be to get honesty back in the Sheriff's Department; this is not just a local matter. He would hope and pray that he would have officers that were willing to stake their career on honesty and integrity.

JP Shadlow asked what the first change that he would see himself implementing in the Sheriff's Office would be.

John Concoby said that he does not know what needs to be taken care of. He said he would like to see trust in the department again.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the incoming Sheriff.

John Concoby said immediately and at his personal convenience.

JP Leadabrand asked if he has had experience with a real crisis such as what is currently going on at the Sheriff's Office.

John Concoby stated that he has been heavily involved in public corruption from his field in developing and being involved with the energy efficient building community. He said that he is a federal witness. He said that many public officials across the country have been charged with wire fraud, mail fraud and campaign finance. He said that, through the development of these

fields, he is solely responsible for bringing forward criminal conduct, misappropriation of funds and the illegal sciences directly involved with the stimulus bill. He stated that he is also the witness that brought in the Department of Justice in the city of Rogers over the misappropriation of the green incentives. He these programs were developed over a fifteen year period which was recognized nationally as the Energy War. The Federal Government came forward to them asking them to build the most energy efficient homes in the country. From this was the development of Research Homes, the weatherization program and the green incentives. He stated that he was an active participant in the field sciences of these programs. His company Energy-Smart Construction received their first Energy Star certification in 1999 and the second in 2002. He was heavily involved in these programs and assisted with the lobbyists and many other government agencies in the underwriting of these funds.

JP Jones asked how he plans on building trust in the department with no previous law enforcement experience.

John Concoby stated that he is not an insider or part of their fraternity. He stated that he will put forward his time to get trust back in the community. He said that is all he can offer as a heavily concerned citizen.

JP Adams asked if he has been to the jail.

John Concoby stated that he did not think it was proper.

3. Joseph P. Fabits

Joseph Fabits stated that he was born and raised in New Jersey and stayed in the military for twenty years. He said he is a Korean War veteran and got out of the military in 1972. He did not know what he wanted to do and went to work for General Motors for six months before becoming a full-time police officer. He stated that, throughout his law enforcement career, he has done everything required of a police officer. He explained his work history up to how he came to work at Cabela's. He said that he does not ask his people to do anything he would not do. He stated that he would love to be a part of the Sheriff's Department.

JP Slinkard asked how his past experience would qualify him to run a large county jail.

Joseph Fabits stated that he has past experience as a manager and experience in establishing a police department. He stated that his heart is still with the Sheriff's Department. He stated that he is a good organizer.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

Joseph Fabits stated that his number one goal is organization and to get rid of the turmoil. He stated that he would call a meeting of everyone in the department, let them get to know him, and discuss goals. He would then have one-on-one meetings with the command officers. After that he would meet with the deputies, jail personnel, and the remainder of staff, and go from there. He stated that he does not like the word 'change.' He would not change a thing but just tune it up.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the Sheriff-elect.

Joseph Fabits stated that he would like to stay on with the Sheriff-elect as part of his staff. He stated that he tries to be fair with everyone and that he does not fire anyone; they fire themselves.

JP Adams asked if he has been to the jail.

Joseph Fabits stated that he was a part-time process server for the County and has had a lot of opportunity to go the jail. He said that he has spoken to a few deputies but he figured the best thing to do is stay out of there.

4. Keith Ferguson

Keith Ferguson stated that he came tonight to verify what he gave on the piece of paper. He said he was Sheriff for ten years. He said he has been sued several times. He said that he ran a no-frills jail for a long time. He said that he is proud to have been elected by the people of Benton County. He said he has a good record of what he improved and gave examples of such. He stated that he fired four or five people the whole entire time he was there and did not make big decisions without talking to the staff first. He said he is not going to play politics; he is going to fix what is broken.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

Keith Ferguson stated that the number one responsibility is to commission his deputies because they cannot perform their duties without being commissioned. He said he would then ask for an audit. After that he would sit down with his subordinates and talk to them to go over what has been going on and how to fix it.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the Sheriff-elect.

Keith Ferguson said after the election in November. He added that the only drawback to that is if he comes in and he starts turning the employees one way or the other. He had this issue with the former Sheriff.

JP Sandlin asked what convinced him to come back to do this again.

Keith Ferguson stated that he loves the people of Benton County. He said that he hates that they had to put up with the turmoil that has gone on for the last two and a half years.

JP Allen thanked Keith Ferguson and stated that he served the public well. He said that there is some friction in regard to the local law enforcement with the major cities. He asked what his philosophy is about working with the cities.

Keith Ferguson stated that he thought he had a fairly good working relationship with the police departments when he left. He said that he would still have a good relationship with them. He said he would put the deputies back out in the field to serve the citizens outside the city limits; they would not be working radar inside the city limits unless they were requested.

JP Jones stated that there was some tension with some of the changes that were made when Sheriff Cradduck came in. Knowing that this position is temporary, for roughly seven months, and that the department seems to have been through so much turmoil already, he asked if Keith Ferguson would go in and clean house or work with the existing command staff who have been running the Sheriff's Department for quite a while.

Keith Ferguson stated that is a loaded question. He said he does not plan on going in and firing people who have been there as a lot of these people are working toward a retirement. He said, if he was appointed Sheriff, he would lay out guidelines, not change policy and procedure. He added, however, that they are going to follow the rules and regulations; they will get three

warnings, and after the third one they will go out the door. He stated that he would talk to the staff before making that decision; he does not want to stir up the Sheriff's Department.

5. Meyer Gilbert

Meyer Gilbert stated that he lives outside of Siloam Springs and moved here in 2014. He said he has fallen in love with NW Arkansas. He said that, in 1992, he began his career as a patrol officer in Clarksdale, MS. He stated that the violent crime rate was high and it was a gang related area. He said he worked up to captain and began to experience a leadership role in the department. He said he took over the training and did a lot of investigation with drugs. He said he reorganized the court system and did grant writing. He said he got vast experience in budgeting in the department. He stated that, in 2001, he took a leave of absence and went overseas to the United Nations in Kosovo. During that time, he was promoted to the Deputy U.S. Commander. He was promoted on the United Nations side, as well. He said he was also responsible for the Regional Operations Unit. He then went to Iraq and, when he came back from Iraq, he was Chief Deputy at the Coahoma County Sheriff's Office. He said that he has experience on both sides - operations and jail. He said he had a six million dollar budget. He stated he is the most unbiased candidate. He said that he has the ability to motivate and reconnect the Sheriff's Department with the community.

JP Adams asked if he has been to the jail.

Meyer Gilbert stated that he has not. He said he has talked to people in the community to get a general idea of what the jail is like.

JP Shadlow asked how he would plan to make a long-term impact for the incoming Sheriff.

Meyer Gilbert stated that he would review the command staff positions that are needed immediately and get the correct command staff in place. He stated that he would want to do a quick audit of property and evidence. He said he would review the people and employees, especially recent promotions that may have been done in haste. He would review the policies and make employees aware of these policies. He said that he would make sure funds are spent responsibly. He said that it would be as seamless as possible going into January 1st. He said that he would reconnect the department with the community and other law enforcement agencies.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the Sheriff-elect.

Meyer Gilbert stated that he will do that immediately. He said that the people of Benton County have chosen a candidate that will probably be the next Sheriff and he will get that person involved now.

JP Chiocco reminded him that there is still an election coming up to determine that.

Meyer Gilbert stated that he is basing it off of historical facts.

JP Slinkard asked why he came to Arkansas from Mississippi.

Meyer Gilbert stated that he married someone from Colorado that he met overseas. He stated that they lived in Clarksdale but, because of the economic aspects of the city and the high crime rate, they no longer wanted to raise their daughters there. He said that he has a good friend who lives in Siloam Springs. He visited him, and felt that this was the place to raise their children.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

Meyer Gilbert stated that it is accountability to the citizens of Benton County, and to other law enforcement agencies. He said he would re-instill trust and morale and be honest and open. He would lead by example.

JP Leadabrand asked if he has had experience with a real crisis such as what is currently going on at the Sheriff's Office.

Meyer Gilbert stated that when he went in as Chief Deputy he had to build from the ground up. He said it takes dedication, planning and a staff in place to get that started. He said he is not scared to face it.

6. Lynn Hahn

Lynn Hahn stated this is his 13th year in the Sheriff's Office. He stated that his personal life is very boring; he is honest and ethical and does not raise his voice or yell at employees. He stated that he truly cares about the Sheriff's Office and the employees. He said that he can and does make tough decisions. He is optimistic that the new Sheriff will find a spot for him in January if he takes this position. He stated that the Sheriff's Office has 250 employees who are mentally abused. They do not want anyone who is not a person of integrity or requires them to be a member of a "good 'old boys club' to succeed. He reiterated the reasons why he would be the best choice. He stated that the healing process has begun and he will help it along.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

Lynn Hahn stated that it is to improve morale at the Sheriff's Office. Once morale has improved, he will move forward with other things.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the Sheriff-elect.

Lynn Hahn stated that he will work with both candidates and get their input. He said that once November is here, he will definitely work with the Sheriff-elect to make the transition smooth and have the least amount of impact in the County.

JP Meyers stated that, if Major Hahn were to get this new position, come January he may not be in the Sheriff's Department. He asked if he is concerned about that. He said that Major Hahn talked about the 'good old boys club.' He asked if he is concerned that he is a part of that club because he was promoted by the current Sheriff.

Lynn Hahn stated that he is hopeful that the new Sheriff will have a place for him. He stated that that he was not part of the 'good old boys club.'

JP Anglin stated that they received a memorandum late this afternoon about local departments having issues with deputies coming into towns and doing things improperly. She asked how he would deal with that.

Lynn Hahn stated that the deputies that are more proactive move in toward town because there is more activity. He stated that he can address that and get them out into the County. He will also monitor any kind of aggressive driving.

JP Moehring asked what he feels the appropriate role of the Sheriff's Office is within the incorporated areas of the County.

Lynn Hahn stated that it is civil process, to back them up if they need assistance. He said they do not have a lot to do inside the city and should be in the County.

JP Moehring asked about the activities that have been going on in the incorporated areas and what he will do to change that perception.

Lynn Hahn stated he will change the perception by changing the reality.

JP Slinkard asked how many people he currently supervises.

Lynn Hahn stated that he supervises everything except for the jail and the courthouse deputies.

JP Leadabrand asked if he has had experience with a real crisis such as what is currently going on at the Sheriff's Office.

Lynn Hahn stated that he has been a problem solver through his career. He said that the Sheriff's Office has been running pretty well. He is willing to jump in with the command staff.

JP Allen asked how much involvement he has had with the supervision of the jail.

Lynn Hahn said very little.

JP Allen stated that they have received pictures tonight showing the jail in deplorable condition.

Lynn Hahn stated that he just took the Major position when Major Holloway stepped down and that is where his focus has been.

JP Meyers asked what he would do to bring the Sheriff's Department back into line with working with the municipal police departments.

Lynn Hahn stated that the problem was the Sheriff because no one would talk to him. He said it is about turning off the Craddock switch and turning on the Hahn switch and he already has a head start on it.

7. Andy Lee

Andy Lee said that the reason he came up from Florida to take an eight month job is because his heart is where his home is and Benton County is his home. He said he was there when the jail was built. He said he spent two days there this week and met everybody that he could meet. He thanked everyone for staying in there and performing their duties. He said his mission will be to right the wrong. He is not going to be their friend; he will be a commander and sharpen their skills. He said that he read some things that JP Moore said in the paper. He said, if it got personal, he apologizes. He has since learned that there are other approaches to doing things. He said that, when Keith Ferguson took over, he handed him an office on a silver platter with a touch of gold. He stated that he does not have an agenda. He has a mission that, when he leaves in eight months, he wants to be able to hand the next Sheriff an office on a silver platter, hopefully with a touch of gold.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

Andy Lee stated that he will talk to everyone in the Sheriff's Office. He said he will get to the ones in leadership and sharpen their leadership skills.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the Sheriff-elect.

Andy Lee stated that, when Keith Ferguson was elected, he brought him in six months earlier and kept him by his side as much as possible. He said that the Sheriff-elect will be right beside him. He said he will invite Shawn Holloway back into the Sheriff's Office and put him in the number two position.

JP Sheridan asked if he is a resident of Florida or Benton County.

Andy Lee stated that he is a Benton County resident and a Benton County voter. He said he has a home in Florida but has come back and registered as a citizen of Arkansas.

JP Jones stated that, in his initial speech, Mr. Lee talked about handing over a Sheriff's Office to the next Sheriff with gold trim. He said that obviously there are some problems in the jail. He said there is already a budget set and there may not be a lot of room left to do some of the things he may want to do. He asked how Mr. Lee would handle that.

Andy Lee stated that he will concentrate on putting the confidence back on the men and women to do their job. He believes there is no need to do a lot of funding on things inside the jail. He said that the jail is structurally sound, it just needs some TLC. He said he will work within the existing budget. He said what is important right now is to build the confidence of the men and women up. He said that he has spent time with both Jeremy Guyll and Lieutenant Holt. He discussed the working conditions under Sheriff Craddock. He also stated that he is not going to take away hot meals and the commissary.

8. Johnie Wood

Johnie Wood stated that he grew up in Gravette and his wife grew up in Pineville, Missouri. He discussed his two-page action and priority plan, as well as his education curriculum. He then gave a background of his work history. He stated that one of the things that he has noticed is the lack of anybody in the Sheriff's position being able to listen. He stated that the employees should be able to submit a complaint without fear of retaliation. He said he has always been known as being approachable. He discussed how he would field complaints with an online complaint form that could be forwarded to the county attorney and internal affairs if a complaint was made against the Sheriff.

JP K. Harrison asked what his number one goal as interim Sheriff is and what he plans to do to accomplish that goal.

Johnie Wood stated that it is for a successful transition to the newly elected Sheriff.

JP Chiocco asked when he plans to establish a working relationship with the Sheriff-elect.

Johnie Wood stated that it will be the day after the election in November.

JP J. Harrison stated that morale is a little low now and asked what he will do to boost morale for the next eight months.

Johnie Wood stated that there would be a form online where anyone can submit an anonymous complaint. He said that, beginning immediately, he would meet with the command staff for an hour for an introduction, followed by getting the complete Sheriff's Department reappointed across the board, and visiting with all of the Sheriff's Office personnel. He said that he would go to the jail in the day and night shifts to find out what he can do and for them to learn that he is someone who will listen to their complaints and will take action.

JP Adams asked if he has been to the jail.

Johnie Wood stated absolutely not.

JP Leadabrand asked about his current employment.

Johnie Wood stated that he is retired from JB Hunt.

JP Leadabrand asked about his most recent law enforcement experience.

Johnie Wood stated that he has fifteen years at JB Hunt in security; in the last seven of those years, he assisted law enforcement in arresting 502 people. Those were all felony cases. JP Slinkard asked about his desire to waive the salary and benefits that would apply to an interim Sheriff.

Johnie Wood stated that he understands what has to be done to change the salary before he takes office and then to change it back. He stated that he does not need the money and that it should be paid back to Benton County.

JP Slinkard asked how he would restore integrity back into the Sheriff's Office.

Johnie Wood stated that certain people have submitted complaints. He said that he would talk to them one-on-one to find out if there are other issues that are not publically known.

JP Moore called a ten minute recess at 8:15 p.m.

JP Moore reconvened the meeting at 8:26 p.m.

Public Comments:

Chuck Wells of Springdale, AR, stated that he is a field sergeant with the Sheriff's Office. He stated that he has listened to the presentations and heard about there being zero accountability and no integrity in the Sheriff's Department. He stated that he is there representing the people that work from sergeant and down. He addressed JP Leadabrand directly and said that whomever gets this job will not be walking into a mess or a disaster. He stated in these types of situations, one or two things happen, either the whole place falls apart or somebody shines. He said that he has listened to the voice of the people that he works with and they are scared to death of the Quorum Court; the JPs have the key in their hands to change that perception tonight. He emphasized that morale starts with the JPs. He said that the Sheriff's Office employees did not ask for what they have been handed but they have dealt with it. He said that he is asking for an olive branch tonight to give hope for the future.

George Hobson, a volunteer helicopter pilot at the Sheriff's Office, stated that Major Hahn has been a very good person to talk to when there have been issues and problems. He stated that he is a man of integrity.

Richard Farris of Springdale stated that he is a retired captain from the Springdale Police Department. He stated that he has worked closely with Captain Bob Bersi and that he will do the right thing even when no one is watching. He stated that, in the Springdale Police Department, a captain is right below the chief so he is qualified to make those decisions. He also said that Mr. Bersi is an excellent manager. He stated that he does not envy the JPs having to make this decision and he appreciates everything they do.

Cave Springs Mayor Travis Lee stated that he is the son of Andy Lee. He said that he is not there to endorse him; he just wanted to thank the JPs for their time tonight.

Keith Brummett stated that he was with the Sheriff's Department for fifteen-and-a-half years. He said that he is thankful to Sheriff Andy Lee for making the Sheriff's part-time division the best in the state at that time. He said was the hiring person when Lynn Hahn came on in the part-time division. He said that Lynn Hahn is an integrity driven person who knows the Sheriff's Office and other agencies and will be able to mend fences with his business background.

Sam Reyna, Constable of Township Three, stated that he had the opportunity of being a part-time deputy with Lynn Hahn. He stated that he was very impressed with him and that all the guys support him and believe in him.

Anita Shue of Rogers, a former employee of Benton County Sheriff's Office, stated that no one from the command staff at the Benton County Sheriff's Office should be interim Sheriff. She said that the Sheriff's Office needs a new start. She said that no one who is loyal to a Sheriff instead of the law should be given the power of the office of the Sheriff; they are not worthy.

Terry Thurman of Rogers said that the JPs have a monumental task. He said that the Sheriff's Department needs help, and needs an interim Sheriff that cares. He wished the JPs good luck.

Roger M. Gibson of Rogers stated that he is a former deputy for both Sheriff Lee and Sheriff Ferguson. He said that, in his opinion, there are only two choices - former Sheriff Lee and former Sheriff Ferguson.

Sheriff candidate Glenn Latham thanked the JPs. He stated that he voted for Sheriff Ferguson and Sheriff Craddock. He said that people make mistakes but we have to move forward. He said that, no offense to the command staff, but the people working in the jail at 2:00 a.m. are the ones that really matter. He said that the ship is listing and needs to be brought upright. He said this will not take someone with a gentle approach. He stated that the JPs know who he has endorsed and said that he will see them in January.

Bob Scott stated the he practiced law here for sixty years. He stated that he knows Lynn Hahn very well and he has the best quality character of anyone he has ever seen in politics or government.

Candidate Q & A Session:

JP Moore announced that each JP would have an opportunity to ask a question of the candidates.

JP Sheridan stated that he has followed Keith Ferguson a long time. He said that, when he went in, he set up a lot of policies and asked which ones are still effect today.

Keith Ferguson stated that he does not have that knowledge. He said that he had the chain of command policy but now the Sheriff's Office has gone to the buddy system.

JP Shadlow asked Meyer Gilbert what Arvest thinks of this.

Meyer Gilbert stated they are a group of really good people and have been very considerate.

JP Shadlow asked what his plan is after the eight months.

Meyer Gilbert stated that he would hope that he could continue with the Sheriff's Department.

JP J. Harrison asked Lynn Hahn what he plans to do to address the conditions in the jail.

Lynn Hahn stated that addressing the issues in the jail would be one of his first priorities.

JP Allen asked Andy Lee for his opinion of the commissary.

Andy Lee stated that there is a dark side to the commissary. He stated that he is not going to do any radical changes when he gets over there but will bring in Shawn Holloway and, when he becomes Sheriff-elect, he will involve him and explain the downside of hot meals and TVs. He stated that he will educate the Quorum Court on the dark side of the commissary.

JP K. Harrison had no questions.

JP Adams asked Lynn Hahn how he will go from being a friend of the employees at the Sheriff's Office to being their leader.

Lynn Hahn stated that he will draw a line when it is time to take care of business.

JP Adams asked if the changes Lynn Hahn implements start to cause a rift between the deputies and the inmates, how he will address it.

Lynn Hahn stated that he does not have personal friendships with very many of the deputies at all. He is a firm believer that, when given a responsibility, that is what should be focused on. He said that he has not been to the jail inspecting it because it is not part of his responsibilities.

JP Jones had no questions.

JP Moore stated that Ms. Shue indicated that people on the command staff were, if not complicit then at least silent. He stated that he had to sit on an appeal board that dealt with the aftermath of some people who came forward when they saw something wrong.

Lynn Hahn stated that he stayed away from the Sheriff. He said he did his job and did it well.

He would encourage all employees to do the right thing and report it. He said it is the same with deputies in the field.

JP Sandlin asked Robert Bersi how he would translate from a municipal, smaller area, with a smaller jail, to soothing troubled waters and making Benton County whole again.

Robert Bersi stated that it is a tall order, however, most of the issues being dealt with are inherent in other law enforcement agencies. He said, as far as dealing with the workforce, you must support them and give them the opportunity to do their job. He said they will start fixing things themselves. He said that is what a supervisor's job is – to hold people accountable.

JP Anglin asked Andy Lee if he still has one son employed by the Benton County Sheriff's Office.

Andy Lee stated that he has one son that is a captain. He said that his son would fall under the chief deputy, not himself. He said that he would not ask him to step down. He said that ordinances can be amended on a temporary basis. He said that he will exhibit no favoritism to his son.

JP Chiocco had no questions.

JP Slinkard asked all the candidates as a group what their position is on the jail chaplain program.

Andy Lee stated that it was started under his administration. He said that it is a good program and he would do what he could to strengthen it.

Johnie Wood said that he is not aware of any problems with it and supports it.

Keith Ferguson said it is a good working program and should be kept. He said it gives the inmates peace of mind to turn to the Lord.

Robert Bersi said he not aware of any problems with the program. He said that they have a similar program in Springdale and it is a great program.

Meyer Gilbert said that humans tend to seek spiritual guidance in a hospital and when incarcerated. He has never known any negative impact for this kind of program.

JP Leadabrand told Meyer Gilbert that he has an interesting resume. He asked if there is any carryover benefit from his experience in Kosovo to the Benton County Sheriff's Office.

Meyer Gilbert stated that his experiences overseas helped him gain an understanding of different management practices. He said that Americans think that their way of doing things is the only way of doing things but the differences have to be worked out. He said it is the same in Benton County or any other county with people of different backgrounds, faiths, etc. He stated that it was a huge department of 1,200 officers and layers of command staff. He said that plenty were openly hostile.

JP Meyers had no questions.

JP Moehring had no questions.

JP Adams made a motion to extend the Q & A time by fifteen minutes, seconded by JP Jones.

Motion passed by unanimous show of hands vote.

JP Jones stated that the JPs did not receive Johnie Wood's action plan and asked him to summarize it.

Johnie Wood said it was divided up into short term and long term priorities. He said it outlined what he plans to do. He said how he would address the budget process. He said he would implement a way that anybody can submit a complaint with their name on it, or anonymously. Finally, he outlined his test for ethics to imagine that what they do appears on the front page of the newspaper and how that would look.

JP Adams asked Andy Lee, if he receives this appointment, if he will vow to do his best to save every single employee out there.

Andy Lee stated that he does not plan on making any changes whatsoever. He said that he will offer Shawn Holloway the chief deputy position. They will find the best fit for the chief deputy that is currently there; he does not need to go anywhere because he accepted responsibility. He said he is not going over there to make friends; he is going over there to be their commander.

Johnie Wood distributed paper copies of his action plan to the JPs.

JP Moore stated that, after questions are finished, JPs can make endorsements. He said that he will then open the floor for nominations. He explained the nomination process in more detail.

JP Endorsements:

JP Adams said that in 1996, Sheriff Lee was at the helm when the new jail was built. He said it was one of the greatest places to work that he could imagine. He said that he used to have a little

saying that Sheriff Andy Lee brought Benton County law enforcement into the 21st century. He asked the JPs to consider appointing Andy Lee.

JP Sheridan recommended Keith Ferguson. He said that he was JP under part of Sheriff Ferguson's ten-year term and that they had fewer problems than ever before. He said that Sheriff Ferguson even returned some money to the County instead of asking for more money.

JP Meyers stated that he would choose Major Hahn.

JP Chiocco said that they can go with someone inside the department or outside and that she is leaning toward going outside.

JP K. Harrison stated that he will not endorse any of the single candidates but that he has talked to a lot of people in the County who want someone from the outside

JP Leadabrand said that a person who is inside knows what to do but he is impressed with the idea of someone from the outside. He stated that he is impressed with Meyer Gilbert's background and likes that he is the most unbiased applicant.

JP Moehring stated that he is concerned about what an outsider might represent and reminded the JPs that a person who works at the Sheriff's Office just won the primary election. He stated that he will put Lynn Hahn's name in as a nomination.

JP Meyers stated that, in Robert's rules of order, a nomination does not require a second.

County Attorney George Spence said that they are not using Robert's rules.

JP Sandlin stated that some of the taint comes from the outside that one person did not do well and so everyone who touched that person is messed up. The cleanest way is to step outside of that loop and select someone who is aware of what is going on but is not participating in that. She stated that she would nominate Robert Bersi.

JP Adams stated that he asked each of the candidates if they have made the effort to go to the jail. He said that a great resume will not make a great interim Sheriff. He has a problem with not taking time to go out to the jail. One candidate made the effort to go out there and do the right thing.

JP Leadabrand stated that he does not know if this is fair since the others may have done many other things besides visiting the jail.

JP Jones stated that he does not want to endorse a single candidate. He thinks that Sheriff Ferguson and Sheriff Lee could step in there but his concern is that they would try to over-correct it to run it their way. He said that he feels comfortable with Meyer Gilbert. He said he is also impressed by Johnie Wood's action plan because it shows he has been thinking about it. He said he would narrow it down to these four.

JP Shadlow said that nobody went to the jail except Sheriff Lee.

Johnie Wood stated that he felt it was inappropriate for people who do not work there to go there and ask a lot of questions and bother the staff.

JP Shadlow said that Johnie Wood has her endorsement.

County Sheriff Nominations:

Keith Ferguson was nominated by JP Sheridan, seconded by JP Anglin.

Andy Lee was nominated by JP Adams, seconded by JP K. Harrison.

Lynn Hahn was nominated by JP Moehring, seconded by JP Meyers.

Johnie Wood was nominated by JP Shadlow, seconded by JP Slinkard.
Meyer Gilbert was nominated by JP Jones, seconded by JP Chiocco.

County Attorney George Spence asked each of the JPs to vote for one applicant. This voice vote was recorded as follows:

Keith Ferguson:	Sheridan, Anglin, Slinkard
Meyer Gilbert:	Allen, Jones, Moore, Sandlin, Chiocco, Leadabrand
Lynn Hahn:	J. Harrison, Meyers, Moehring
Andy Lee:	K. Harrison, Adams
Johnie Wood:	Shadlow

After the initial roll call, JPs K. Harrison, Moehring, Shadlow and Slinkard changed their votes to Meyer Gilbert. The final vote was recorded as follows:

Keith Ferguson:	Sheridan, Anglin
Meyer Gilbert:	Allen, Jones, Moore, Sandlin, Chiocco, Leadabrand, K. Harrison, Moehring, Shadlow, Slinkard
Lynn Hahn:	J. Harrison, Meyers
Andy Lee:	Adams

Resolution Request Appointing a Successor to Fill the Vacancy in the Office of County Sheriff for Benton County:

JP Jones made a motion to appoint Meyer Gilbert to County Sheriff, seconded by JP Sandlin.

A roll call vote was recorded as follows:

14 for:	Sheridan, Shadlow, J. Harrison, Allen, K. Harrison, Adams, Jones, Sandlin, Slinkard, Chiocco, Leadabrand, Moore, Meyers, Moehring
1 against:	Anglin

Motion passed.

JP Moore declared the meeting adjourned at 10:01 p.m.